



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 29, 2020
To: City of Austin Design Commission
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group
Subject: Downtown Density Bonus Program review of the 321 West 6th Street project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.
Meeting Date: April 24, 2020; 12:00 pm, Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting
Applicant: Richard T. Suttle, Jr.
Architect: Page

The project is located at 321 West 6th St at Guadalupe St.

Existing zoning for the property is CBD and it is not within the Capitol View Corridor. The lot area is 20,644 SF and the total proposed project area is 516,100 square feet (Office: 105,858 SF, Retail: 5,357 SF, Multi-Family: 402,296 SF, Flex: 2,589 SF). The proposed FAR for this project is 25:1, this is more than the 8:1 maximum allowed, so an increase in FAR of 17:1 is being requested (350,948 SF). The proposed building height is 770.5 feet with 63 floors. 490 parking spaces are proposed in twelve levels of parking; two below grade and 10 above grade. The project proposes to fulfill the Community Benefit requirement by paying 100% of the bonus area to the Affordable Housing Trust (\$2,735,639.66)

Per the Density Bonus Program ordinance, the applicant is required, at a minimum, to meet the three gatekeeper requirements:

1. Substantially comply with the City's Urban Design Guidelines
2. Provide streetscape improvements that meet the Great Streets Program Standards.
3. Commit to a minimum of 2-Star rating under Austin Energy's Green Building Program.

WORKING GROUP COMMENTS REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

AREA WIDE GUIDELINES

1. Create dense development-
25:1 FAR being requested. Project complies with this section.
2. Create mixed-use development-
The project has residential, office, and retail uses. This project complies with this section.
3. Limit development which closes downtown streets-
This project is not proposing to permanently close any streets. Project complies with this section.
4. Buffer neighborhood edges-
Project does not border any neighborhoods. This section is not applicable.
5. Incorporate civic art in both public and private development-
Public art is being proposed at corner of 6th and Guadalupe Streets. This project complies with this section.
6. Protect important public views-
Project is not within the Capitol View Corridor and does not encroach ROW. This project complies with this section.
7. Avoid historical misrepresentations-
Project design is a modern style. Project complies.

8. Respect adjacent historic buildings-
No adjacent buildings identified as historic landmarks. Section is not applicable.
9. Acknowledge that rooftops are seen from other buildings and the street-
Mechanical equipment on roof will be screened. Project complies with this section.
10. Avoid the development of theme environments-
No theme shown. Project complies.
11. Recycle existing building stock-
Existing buildings will be demolished. This project does not comply.

*Project complies with 8 of the 9 applicable Area Wide Guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETSCAPE

1. Protect the pedestrian where the building meets the street-
Building does not meet the street. Overhead sun/rain protection device only appears to be 3 feet. Project does not comply. Overhead protection is inadequate; it is too high and not deep enough per UDG.
2. Minimize curb cuts-
There are two curb cuts planned, which is one less than the three existing curb cuts. Project complies with this section.
3. Create a potential for two-way streets-
Both streets are currently one-way streets. A two-way garage entry on 6th allows for converting streets. Project complies with this section.
4. Reinforce pedestrian activity-
Beyond implementing the required Great Streets sidewalks, not enough emphasis is given to reinforcing pedestrian activity at the streetscape. Project does not comply. The open space at 6th and Guadalupe has great potential, but building does not engage this area.
5. Enhance key transit stops-
There are no transit stops on site or adjacent site. Not applicable to this project.
6. Enhance the streetscape-
Great Streets is not fully provided due to Austin Energy's underground utilities along Guadalupe St. Project does not comply with this section.
7. Avoid conflicts between pedestrians and utility equipment-
AE vents at sidewalk will create safety issues for pedestrians. Project does not comply with this section.
8. Install street trees-
Full street trees not provided along Guadalupe St. Project does not comply with this section
9. Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting-
Project complies with this section.
10. Provide protection from cars/promote curbside parking-
Project does not comply. There is no pedestrian protection from vehicles at parallel parking. The large curb cut at garage is also dangerous for pedestrians. Driveway should have unique pavers to differentiate entry from rest of sidewalk. Additionally, a driveway median will help to act as a pedestrian refuge from vehicles passing by. Provide pedestrian protections to comply.
11. Screen mechanical and utility equipment-
Equipment is screened and/or within building envelope. Project complies.
12. Provide generous street-level windows-
Large windows are shown on street level. Project complies.
13. Install pedestrian-friendly materials at street level-
Concrete and tall glass are not pedestrian friendly by themselves, but screening helps. Project minimally complies.

*Project complies with 6 of the 12 applicable Guidelines for Public Streetscape.

GUIDELINES FOR PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

This section is not applicable to this project.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS

1. Build to the street-
Building built to the street, except at open space. Project complies.
2. Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level-
Project has retail, banking, and office/residential lobby on ground floor. Project complies.
3. Accentuate primary entrances-
Primary entry to retail is unclear. A thin awning above door is unnoticeable. Entrance should be given more attention. Entry for bank is articulated well. Project minimally complies.
4. Encourage the inclusion of local character-
The building design shows no indication of local character. Project does not comply. Provide local character as outlined in the UDG to comply.
5. Control on-site parking-
All parking is in garage. Design screens automobiles. Project complies with this section.
6. Create quality construction-
Project appears to comply.
7. Create buildings with human scale-
Double-height floor at street level does not provide human scale. Project does not comply. Provide smaller scale at street level to comply.

*Project complies with 5 of the 7 Guidelines for Buildings.

Positive features of this project include the mix of uses including retail, office, and residential as well as the proposed reduction in parking for all uses. Concerns primarily center on the lack of energizing the pedestrian activity at the street level and lack of human scale. It is unclear how the open space with public art will function. The Design Commission would like to request that an update on the "interactive" art installation be provided to staff once a direction is decided. In addition, no special treatment has been given to the outdoor cafe area; adding chairs and tables does not make it a special place where pedestrians will want to congregate, especially if unshaded as the building does not provide adequate protection to pedestrians from sun or rain. While, the paving responds to the building, it does not blend well into the public sidewalks. While not required by Great Streets, this will result in a "patchwork" of paving patterns throughout downtown. We recommend the project be more sensitive to this condition as well as distinguishing between the drop-off and pedestrian circulation areas. Lastly, additional above-ground plantings should be considered along Guadalupe Street to soften the hard edge, where street trees have not been provided, and to more appropriately acknowledge the adjacent Republic Square park. If plantings are not feasible in the ROW then perhaps a green wall or interior plantings behind the glazing can be accommodated.

Based on the items outlined in the above review, the Planning & Urban Design Working Group has determined that this project, as presented, is not in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines. We encourage you to address the concerns listed above before presenting to the Design Commission in order to ensure substantial compliance. The Working Group has appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on this project.

Respectfully,



David Carroll, Chair
City of Austin Design Commission

Working Group Members in attendance - David Carroll, Evan Taniguchi, Bart Whatley, Melissa Henao-Robledo

cc: Evan Taniguchi, Bart Whatley, Melissa Henao-Robledo, Aaron Jenkins, Jorge Rousselin